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EMS Newsletter

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Community Training Stressed

Montana's wide open spaces or mountainous and inaccessible areas impart feelings of solitude and freedom. However, these same factors can increase the chances of death for a person suddenly taken ill or injured.

There is an average of 4.7 persons per square mile in Montana, but the average by county varies from a low of .04 persons per square mile in Garfield and Petroleum counties to a high of 58.6 in Silver Bow County.

Six counties have densities of less than one person per square mile. This means there are few neighbors or few passers-by to be relied upon to come to a victim's aid. Subtract from those few neighbors the number who could offer competent first aid care and there are probably few persons who could help in an emergency.

Although the Emergency Medical Services Bureau receives many requests for information on how to purchase an ambulance for a rural area and what requirements are necessary to establish an ambulance service, the Bureau points out that in some areas it would be more sensible for a community to receive first aid training than it would be to buy a $20,000-plus ambulance that might have only five or six critical runs a year.

"We're receiving calls from communities of 19 persons," Robert Quam, EMS Bureau chief, said. "They want to improve emergency services but an ambulance is not the only way. Training comes first and is inexpensive."

The upkeep and maintenance of an ambulance might be too costly for some areas to handle, according to Jerry Luchau, coordinator for ambulance licensing and EMT training in the state.

However, training is available and a trained neighbor or co-worker with a basic medical kit could save a person's life then keep him living until an ambulance could be sent from a larger population area to take the victim to a medical facility. The medical kits and the training could be vital to saving a life but they are not very expensive.

Another aspect of training versus ambulance purchasing is the response time of a trained relative or neighbor versus that of an ambulance.

"We're never going to have a response system fast enough to save a person's life when he has

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EMT instructor Deane Hess from Missoula checks the splinting of a supposedly fractured knee. Argerous Filosotos applied the splint to victim Roy Burditt.

Inter-State Communications Discussed

Agreements to strive for increased cooperation between states in planning and implementing EMS radio communications came out of separate informal meetings with EMS and communications personnel from neighboring Western states.

In October, personnel from the Montana Emergency Medical Services Bureau met with Chris Cronberg and John Wilkinson of the Wyoming Hospital Research and Education Foundation. Both men are also involved with implementing the Robert Wood Johnson grant for Northwest Wyoming.

The meeting resulted in agreements that mutual aid pacts might be entered into by the representatives from Wyoming and Montana EMS systems when necessary to handle radio communications from Wyoming to Montana and vice-versa.

On November 7, communication and EMS officials from Washington, Idaho, Oregon and Montana met in Spokane for a similar exchange of information about the status and plans for EMS communications in each of the states.

Participants agreed at the close of the meeting to tell their local Associations of Public-Safety Communication Officers (APCO) about the information gathered at the meeting and to ask the APCO chapters to lend their support to help coordinate Emergency Medical Services radio communication.

Courses to Start

Emergency Medical Technician courses scheduled for the upcoming months include one starting in Conrad on December 17 and six others scheduled to begin sometime in January.

Course coordinator for the Conrad class is Joe Christiaens. Course coordinators for the areas proposing EMT classes in January are Dave Collings in Deer Lodge, Thomas Safford and Ed Glass in Baker, Bonnie Wood in Harlem, Mark Holton in Bozeman and Mike Larrabbe at Big Sky.

No coordinator has been appointed for the Lewistown EMT class which is expected to begin early in January. Coordinator for the Worden EMT class, which has not set a specific starting time, is Gordon Mohr.

As of October, 1974, there were 1,184 EMTs certified of which 536 were EMT-As.

Areas that have recently started classes include Choteau, Wolf Point, Poplar and Culbertson. Already well into the 81-hour session are classes in Cut Bank, Miles City, Livingston and Browning. Missoula will finish its third EMT course on December 12.

Trained Friends Can Give Prompt Care

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only two or three minutes to live," Quam said.

His statement was expanded by Drew Dawson, whose job in the EMS Bureau is to increase the number of first aid trained persons in the state, as well as to assist in ambulance licensing and training of EMTs.

Dawson commented, "Proper first aid care by the general public is essential to the maintenance of life. No matter how rapid the response of the ambulance, how well trained the ambulance personnel or how sophisticated the equipment, they can do little if the person has already needlessly expired through the lack of on-the-spot first aid."

Cardiac arrest, severe arterial bleeding or stoppage of breathing could well lead to death before an ambulance could arrive. However, all cases could be treated and perhaps saved by lay persons trained in first aid pending the arrival of the ambulance, Dawson said.

Sometimes simply knowing when not to move a person could prevent paralysis or aggravation of existing injuries, Dawson, an Emergency Medical Technician and ambulance attendant, said. In cases where a neck or back is broken, improper movement could kill or permanently paralyze the victim, he added.

First aid training in the state is offered mainly through the American National Red Cross where classes are offered free of charge.

The Red Cross has a variety of classes ranging from Basic First Aid that can be taught to fifth graders to an Advanced First Aid and Emergency Care class that lasts a minimum of 40 hours. A Standard First Aid Multimedia class takes one working day of eight hours and is used by many governmental and industrial entities to train their employees.

Because Red Cross first aid instructors are in short supply across the state, efforts are currently being made to increase the number of instructors at all levels of training, Dawson said.

The EMS Bureau anticipates receiving funding from the Mountain States Regional Medical Program to set up an instructor-trainer program to help areas that have no first aid instructors, Quam said. Dawson will coordinate the project.

Persons interested in American Red Cross first aid courses or first aid instructor classes should contact their local Red Cross office or the Wrangler Division of the Red Cross in Great Falls, Dawson said. The EMS Bureau can also provide additional information and assistance pertaining to Red Cross training.

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Pat Murdo, editor.

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Grant to Fund EMT Classes

Part of a $120,874 grant from the Department of Health, Education and Welfare will help purchase Emergency Medical Technician training aids to be given to Montana institutions of post-secondary education.

Vocational-technical schools, community colleges and colleges will receive the equipment if they agree to use it for EMT classes. Also, as part of the agreement they must maintain and replace the equipment.

Only $99,430 of the grant will go toward purchasing films, ambulance equipment, such as splints and stretchers, training manikins, emergency medical supplies such as stethoscopes and blood pressure cuffs.

The rest of the grant is designed to further the training of emergency department personnel. The Montana Medical Education and Research Foundation will coordinate the workshops and seminars.

Steve Moody, an EMT and former ambulance driver in Missoula, has joined the EMS Bureau to help the institutions that want to set up the courses.

EMT courses will continue to be taught throughout the state but the training aids purchased under the grant will go only to the schools. This will allow more equipment to go to other EMT classes, according to Robert Quam, EMS Bureau chief.

By December 15 Moody hopes to reach areas that plan on offering EMT courses through schools.

Participation in the grant program requires a school to have a local course director who will be responsible for scheduling classes, finding classrooms, reaching agreements with local hospitals for in-service training and recruiting instructors.

The course director need not be on the school staff but he or she will have to work through the school, Moody said. The course director should be involved in EMS or connected in some way with EMT training, he added.

Two attitudes have prevailed in talking with persons interested in setting up the school courses, Moody said. One attitude is that the instructor should be volunteer in order to keep down the cost of the class. For persons who already volunteer much of their time to an ambulance service the increased cost of paying instructors might be too much to bear and local governments might not be willing to pay for training for the community volunteer ambulance attendants, Moody said.

However, if the instructors are paid they might be easier to recruit and more willing to continue on a year-by-year basis, Moody said.

The class to be taught by physicians, nurses, EMTs or any paramedical personnel meets the basic course specifications set out by the EMS Bureau and the Department of Transportation's EMT course guidelines. By putting some of the EMT courses in the schools the EMT will be professionalized a little more, Quam said.

Under the grant requirements, each school must offer two EMT classes a year and one refresher class. Most of the classes are set to begin in January.

Participating in the program are Northern Montana College at Havre, Western Montana College in Dillon, Dawson Community College in Glendive, Flathead Valley Community College in Kalispell and Miles City Community College, which already has a course under way. Dillon has completed registration and the introductory unit for its EMT class.

Vo-tech centers in Helena, Great Falls, Butte and Billings are scheduled to offer the classes under the grant.

The Missoula Technical Center received a separate grant of $14,-787 from the Department of Health, Education and Welfare to help pay for EMT classes.

Moody stressed that the grant to the EMS Bureau will be used to establish high quality training for Emergency Medical Technicians. "The delivery of effective care to the victim of a medical emergency makes more sense than a race against death to the hospital," Moody said.

Tri-County Area Seeks Grant

The Emergency Medical Services Councils in Ravalli, Missoula and Mineral counties have submitted an application for an EMS grant to purchase communication and extrication equipment and to improve transportation facilities.

The proposal was drawn up under the direction of the project director for the Robert Wood Johnson Grant Policy Board. Monies from the RWJ grant, plus local funding, will be used as match if the grant is successful, according to Dave Hunt, project director.

Because of the large amount of matching funds available through the RWJ grant and because of the organizational structure already existing in the three counties, the areas is seeking funds apart from the proposed state application for EMS funding.

However, the three councils are working closely with the state EMS Bureau to make sure their proposal is compatible with the statewide system, Hunt said.

The $142,080 grant request covers $94,800 for equipment and $47,280 for evaluation purposes.

Two mountain top base stations to cover communications for the area would be funded along with two heliports, one at the new Superior Hospital and one at the Marcus Daly Hospital in Hamilton.

A new ambulance for Ravalli County would also be provided for by the grant. Other equipment requests include funding for communication equipment for the Superior Hospital, the urban Missoula dispatch center, the Seeley Lake area and Ravalli County; extrication equipment for all the areas, and paging equipment for Ravalli County and the Seeley Lake area.

Red Cross Certificate Awarded to Montanan

Quick thinking and mouth-to-mouth resuscitation helped save one Montanan's life and earned for another the Red Cross Certificate of Merit bearing former President Richard Nixon's signature.

Both Maurice Ullom and Bruce Grabofsky work as linemen for the Montana Power Co. in Conrad. More than a year ago, in August, 1973, Ullom became tangled in wires while working on street lights and he suffered electrical shock. Grabofsky immediately brought him to the pavement with the ladder truck and gave him mouth-to-mouth resuscitation.

The Red Cross Certificate of Merit was awarded to twenty-three -year-old Grabofsky approximately a year later by the local Pondera County Red Cross chairman.

The certificate, signed by the President and by the national Red Cross chairman, is awarded to anyone who has completed a Red Cross class (in first aid, water safety or small craft) and saved a person's life. If a victim dies, the award may be received if the rescuer can show that all possible life-sustaining attempts were made prior to the victim's receiving medical care.

Grabofsky had completed his Red Cross class on April 14, 1973 in Great Falls at the Montana Power Building.

In order to receive the certificate Grabofsky had to document the validity of the rescue andUllom wrote a letter to the Red Cross in his behalf. Fred Theilen with the Wrangler Chapter of the Red Cross in Great Falls helped fill out the forms substantiating the rescue and showing that Grabofsky had not caused or contributed to the accident.

In addition to receiving the Certificate of Merit Grabofsky received a pin and a flag that had been flown over the Capitol in Washington, D.C. The flag was from Congressman Dick Shoup.

The Red Cross also has a Certificate of Recognition for any person who has saved a human life using first aid skills learned through the mass media or a Red Cross demonstration. This certificate does not carry the President's name and the application goes only through the local chapters instead of through the National Chapter as does the application for a Certificate of Merit.

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The Governor's Emergency Medical Services Advisory Council will meet December 6 in the Lewis and Clark Room of the Colonial Hilton in Helena at 8 a.m.

The Montana Health Association's annual meeting will be December 3, 4, and 5 at the Village Motor Inn in Missoula. The conference theme is "Education: The Foundation of Public Health Practice." Registration fees are $15 for Montana Health Association members, $20 for non-members and $5 for students.

The Montana legislature will convene January 6. One bill of interest to Emergency Medical Technicians might be a Montana Medical Association sponsored proposal for EMT licensing by the Board of Medical Examiners.

MERRY CHRISTMAS!

On December 12, the Missoula EMT class members will be guinea pigs for a national standardized EMT test that was developed by the University of Alabama. Many states have already tested the exam which is quite comprehensive, according to Jerry Luchau, state EMT coordinator. The test is not the same as the test for admission into the National Registry of EMTs.

The Choteau Telephone Exchange will offer the "911" emergency number to its subscribers beginning on December 5. In the Dutton, Fairfield, Pendroy and Power telephone service areas another number, "Enterprise 777," went into operation on November 19. Users of "Enterprise 777" ask the operator for "Enterprise 777" and no charge is made for the call which is connected with the Choteau Emergency Station to alert the fire department, ambulance service or sheriff.

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

The Cascade County EMS Council will preview the rough draft of the Cascade County section of the statewide EMS Grant application at its meeting on December 11. Included in the grant application is a survey of needs, current capabilities of meeting these needs and proposed development projects.

Emergency Medical Service Bureau
State Department of Health
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Helena, Montana 59601

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